

Roberts Elementary PTO Board Meeting
Friday, September 6, 2013
8:15 a.m. Roberts Cafe

In attendance: Courtney Tardy, Kelly Wehrer, Alyson Rooney, Natalie Smith, Elizabeth Singleton, Kara Niles, Lauren Bloomquist, David Heikkinen, Anjum Khan, Esther Pastore, Pauline Ward, Anastasia Osho, Helen Belgrave, Vera Peneva, Marya Scott, Misad Obregon, Elizabeth Grandich, Valerie Tompson, Camille Jenman, Chloe Krane, Jarret Robins, Estela Robins, Paige Castaneda, Vanessa Irby/Engel, Rosa Aguilar, Weiun Zhang, Ali Pilcher, Anna Kaplan, Emanuela Corradino, Jennifer Thornton, Yvonne Segal, Kirsty McCormack, and others

Courtney Tardy, President, called the PTO meeting to order at 8:16 am.

Welcome Back PTO Report - Courtney Tardy

PTO Board please stand up and introduce yourselves.

School Report – Principal Graves

We have enhanced our Magnet program – a few years ago we had a Magnet Review – and we posed the question to ourselves: What can we do with our Arts program to make it integrated? Our goal is a musical theater program. First musical will be the 4th grade musical. 53 children from 4th grade have already expressed an interest to participate– a little more than half of the grade. Students are working every Tuesday and Thursday afterschool until 5:30pm. Everyone has stated their interests/skills – visual arts, singing, dancing. They've had one day of auditions and one day of rehearsal and they are already singing and dancing in synch and they look fantastic.

The third grade musical will be Annie. The 5th grade musical will be Suessical. We are looking into getting a space for this one so more can attend, we are talking to Rice.

We've had an unexpected increase in enrollment in kindergarten. We have an additional 18 children, right now spread over the 6 classes. We are looking at a candidate to open up a new kindergarten class. Next year we might take a few less magnet or wait longer on informing the wait list. Any child that enrolled after the max 22 students per class has been given a temporary class assignment. It's not ideal but neither is having 26 in a kinder class. We had to wait to begin the hiring process for the new teacher because we were waiting for parents to finish enrollment.

The candidate has been made an offer and we are waiting to hear back from her. She has 4 years of experience, she has served as team leader, and was awarded teacher of the year at her school. Her school is a charter system so she is not under contract. She'll be in Miss Bowman's old classroom, we had hoped to make that a reading intervention lab but not this year. We already have the furniture for the kindergarten class.

New teachers are doing well, kids seem happy. Team leaders are wowing about their team mates.

Curriculum info night Sep 10 for K-2. Sep 11th for 3d 4th 5th. We'll explain new accountability system. You'll understand what the routines look like. Will start at 6:30 pm in cafeteria and then will move to classrooms. It is a parent-only event.

Volunteers – We had a great sign up this year. Please stop by with your driver license and Ms Niksch can make a photocopy. 5th grade parents please do this quickly as first field trip is coming up.

Sep 18 – 5th grade day of service. They will go to the Food Bank. They will learn what it means to give back.

Huge thanks to Padres – they had a “To Do List” 3 pages long, much of the work you can’t see but it was critical. They came in and worked hard just before the school year began. Now they are working on a life-size physics garden. There was a big turnout from the Padres. Thank you.

Q I’m new at school, I need background check. How long will it take?

A It will take about 2 weeks to process

Q is it necessary if you volunteer at library

A If you work with kids – in the class, on a field trip, then you need clearance.

Treasurer’s Report - Alyson Rooney

We expect to raise \$xx and we expect to spend all of it. Some examples of how the money gets spent: New teachers get \$xx for supplies, returning teachers get \$xx. We paid for 2 new laptop carts, we maintain the grounds, and we fund teacher development. What you do to help us raise money is great and necessary.

If you are volunteering for the school and you need to be reimbursed, we have forms for that. Please note that we don’t reimburse for tax so please use the tax exempt form that we can provide you.

Volunteer/room parent coordinator - Kelly Wehrer

In May we were obliged to switch to the HISD website platform so we lost our online volunteer sign up.

Classroom volunteer opportunities - Look at sheet on community night see if there are any openings. Kirsty has put up a copy on the website.

Problems getting onto website, click on link to Kirsty. The website is password protected.

If you’d like to volunteer in any capacity, I’ll be here after meeting, come talk to me and we will find a slot that works for you.

Q – When is room parent info coming?

A – It will come via the teachers. We need to check that all parents are OK with getting emails from room parents.

Culture of Giving/ 100% PTO - David Heikennin

We’ve named the campaign “Culture of Giving” because we want 100% participation. Every dollar and every penny goes into Rita’s budget. Without this money we can’t do a lot of things. Ask friends, grandparents and uncles, anyone who’d like to support your child’s school

We are on our way to one class having 100% participation That teacher is pretty pushy.

Q –Is there a time limit?

A – It is really 4 weeks, but we will take money any time you want to give it. Its targeted to end at the end of the month.

Q – Regarding the reward for 100 % participation for the classrooms. Do I need to submit a form for each child?

A- That's not necessary. Just list all the children and their classroom teachers on the form, and each will get counted.

Roberts has about 760 children, we are about 360 families. Last year 237 families participated, this year I think we'll get even higher.

Any other Qs contact me or my wife Ann.

Auction - Courtney Tardy

Auction this year will be held on March 8th at Rice. Some have already contacted me for various pieces. It's a fun event and a fun process. We have an auction meeting next Thursday right after drop off. Come and hear more about what pieces are available. We'll do a sign-up genius.

We work on this throughout the fall – food, decorations, socials (Parent-hosted parties), finding auction items

Q- Can you explain: What is the auction?

A- It's a party, you buy a ticket to attend, it's an adult-only party – Roberts parents at their best and worst.

You can put your stickers to bid on different items, for example, each class's decorates a cow. Other items, games gift certificates, jewelry, socials (Roberts parent-run parties), etc.

The Auction party is food, dancing, drinks, it's a lot of fun. It's also a very important fundraiser for our PTO budget. We have budgeted to raise xxK this year. It's a lot of money but we can do it.

International Festival – Emanuela Corradino, Anna Kaplan

It's a non-fundraising, community-building event. We have it every fall, you can see and talk to a lot of people, get to know people from your country, learn about different cultures

It's on Oct 18 and the theme is "Legends and Fairytales". It runs from 3-6pm.

No t-shirts this year, it might disappoint the kids, but it's a big pain and a big expense so we are not doing them this year. We will start our meetings every Friday, after the monthly PTO meeting or otherwise come at 8 on any other Friday after drop-off.

There are forms, updates, deadlines, calendar online under international festival on the Roberts website.

There are displays from each country. There are also presentations during the week - in the past it was a lot of confusion, we are trying to make it easier this year. You can speak about the country you are from, where you visited, lived in, flew over in an airplane! It's up to you.

For example, I'm from Russia. It's so big – I don't know what's happening over in the Ural mountains. I show them what I know - St Petersburg. People can see where my son spends the summer, what he eats, what it looks like.

Please consider it, there will be a form in the next Tues folder. Some teachers will tell you what they want, some leave it open. Your presentation can be from 10-20 minutes long.

Call for Nominees for Budget & Nominating Committee - Courtney Tardy

I'm like a variety host, explaining many things, it won't always be like this.

This year we will bring forward the Budget and Nominating Committees so there is more time for them to get the work done, and to aid in planning.

The Nominating Committee helps prepare/advise and select the proposed slate for next year's PTO, looking within our already existing ranks and also trying to reach out to people who are ready to lead or volunteer. They work at identify and bringing up new leadership. This way we can have an informed slate. They can also advise for standing committees.

The Budget Committee decides how the PTO funds will be spent and works with Rita to identify the best places to get the best return for our money. The committee is open to PTO Board Committee, and there are open slots as well.

If you have an interest in either of these committees, please let me know.

Teacher Appreciation - Jennifer Thornton

We used to do this once a month, now we will do it every 6 weeks, doing 2 grades at a time. I am looking for someone join a committee and help.

We do the luncheons, we do a gift and teacher appreciation week – during that week we will do a snack, or a breakfast or a lunch. We will send reminders about teacher appreciation week.

Instead, room parents do class parties, end of year gift and the teacher's birthday gift.

If you like to cook, like to bake, please come see me.

Kudos and Shout Outs – Courtney Tardy

OK I'm back again!

I wanted to say a special thanks to certain teachers and volunteers. I'm amazed at the energy and commitment and work and how much our children are positively impacted.

Linda Wilson – school supplies – we carried those in. 6 hours of manual labor. It's not done by fairies, its done by the PTO. Over \$xx is collected and managed, and she is also responsible for stocking the school stores.

Camille Jenman and Karen Brisch – thanks for getting the work room in order. Angela is new but is helping greatly.

Marthe and Nialle – They are our hospitality chairs. They have done our first day coffee, our meet the teacher, and this PTO meeting – these events are sponsored and funded by PTO and run by PTO thanks to these two.

September Birthdays - Courtney Tardy

Emanuela Corradino, Meredith Beebe, our August and Sept birthdays. We won't sing but I do have cupcakes.

New Business – Courtney Tardy

Rita Graves and Courtney Tardy use the same drycleaner, Collegiate Cleaners corner of Bissonet and Greenbriar– they saw an old Poe binder. Turns out, they give 10% of what parents spend back to the school. We tracked them down and they are willing to do this. They give each family a dry cleaning bag. We are the Roberts Mustangs. It will say Roberts on it. You pay in advance at Collegiate and they never

lose anything. There will be a Roberts binder, you can sign in - Poe got \$xx back last year. That's just money on the table.

I'd like to see what kind of things we can do with businesses.

Q - Do we have other existing arrangements?

A - We get checks from Randalls, Target, Kroger, and box tops. People need to register. Amy McCallum is in charge of box tops.

Positive Works – Rita Graves

You should have received information about the upcoming Positive Works coffees. They will be premiering a minidocumentary that highlights our work at Roberts. The kids talk about how empowered they feel to be upstanders. There will be two showings, one at 8:15 or at lunch. Once they've done public screening it will then be posted on our website.

Positive Works was started by 2 women in the area – how to teach children to stand up to bullying. It's exclusionary tactics, cyber bullying, not the classic schoolyard bullying. They work with a doctor who does studies on the subject.

The cycle of bullying stops when bystanders don't allow it. It stops persistent, targeted behavior. Are we building strong relationships here at Roberts – do students have a teacher they can go to? We completed a connection survey last fall, and will do so again to ensure every child is known by more than one adult on campus. We put every 5th grade child on the wall - each teacher wrote their name next to a child they have a strong tie to. Those that did not have ties – our social worker develops a plan to develop those ties.

We don't have a significant problem with bullying, but we do have some of those small level behaviors that become a problem by high school if unchecked. So kids learn to step in when they see something not right, they are empowered.

Q – Given the diversity of our school – are there problems with people not knowing different cultures.

A- I see that at other places but not so much here at Roberts. Our school is so diverse that we see differences as well as similarities. We don't hear "I don't like you because you are X" Rather, we get clique-ish behavior, exclusionary behavior, for example, "You're my friend I don't want you to play with anyone else."

Comments on Positive Works:

-Very effective

Q - Is it age- and stage- developmentally appropriate behaviors?

A - The program does have different plans for different ages.

Roberts Directory – Kelly Wehrer

If you 'd like to be in the directory, but are not sure if you've signed up, please come see me.

Adjournment

At 9:04 President Courtney Tardy announced that the next PTO Board meeting would be Friday, October 4th at 8:15 in the Roberts Café. She then adjourned the meeting.

Next PTO meeting Friday, October 4 at 8:10 in the Roberts Cafe